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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000519

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: UN ENVOY BRIEFS DIPLOMATS ON ZIMBABWE VISIT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Glenn Warren for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Haile Menkerios, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, briefed western diplomats, including the Ambassador, June 17 on his mission to Zimbabwe, and specifically on a meeting earlier in the day with President Robert Mugabe. Menkerios said he came away from the meeting with Mugabe with the impression that ZANU-PF would do anything necessary to win. Mugabe denied that ZANU-PF was responsible for the ongoing violence. He defended the suspension of NGO humanitarian assistance by alleging that NGOs had a political agenda. He claimed that his efforts at dialogue with the MDC had been rebuffed. Menkerios also discussed the importance of observers to deter violence, both before and after the election, and said the UN was supporting efforts by SADC, the AU, and ECOWAS to field observation teams. END SUMMARY.

The Mission

¶2. (C) Menkerios said his mission was to deliver UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's message of concern regarding the current atmosphere of violence and intimidation, and to determine what could be done to encourage the government to create an atmosphere for a free and fair election. To effectively carry out his mission, he needed to see all stakeholders. The GOZ had initially sought to restrict his access to the opposition, western diplomats, and civil society, but Mugabe, in their meeting earlier in the day, had promised he could see whomever he wished. Menkerios told diplomats he planned to meet with the opposition and civil society. Menkerios commented that Mugabe had complained that previous UN and other visitors had "betrayed" Zimbabwe by their reports. Menkerios said he promised Mugabe he would be truthful.

Mugabe in Denial

13. (C) Menkerios said he initiated the meeting with Mugabe by telling him that ZANU-PF-organized violence would make a fair election impossible. Mugabe responded that there had been some ZANU-PF violence immediately after the election on the part of exuberant winners, but ZANU-PF had quickly put a stop to this. MDC violence had continued, including assaults and the burning of houses. Mugabe added that the government would take necessary steps to end it.

14. (C) Menkerios countered to Mugabe that he had heard various reports of ongoing ZANU-PF violence and displacement of people. SADC had told him of violence and African heads of state had condemned it. The GOZ could not deny it. Menkerios told Mugabe that if he wanted acceptance of the election results the violence had to stop.

15. (C) According to Menkerios, Mugabe claimed that some alleged victims of violence were feigning injuries to get assistance. He denied ongoing ZANU-PF-organized violence.

Suspension of NGOs an Inconvenience

16. (C) Menkerios said he raised the issue of the suspension

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of NGOs with Mugabe and asked how food would reach people. Mugabe justified the suspension on alleged political activities of some NGOs. Menkerios argued to Mugabe that action should not be taken against all NGOs, but only confirmed violators. Mugabe responded that the suspension was short term and would be lifted after the election. Because it was short term, people would not be significantly affected.

Menkerios Urges Dialogue...

17. (C) Menkerios said he argued to Mugabe that the country was divided; for stability there had to be dialogue. A winner take all posture would be disastrous. Mugabe said he had tried to engage the MDC in dialogue, but the MDC had not been responsive. Mugabe said he would make another effort at dialogue after the election. Menkerios interpreted Mugabe to mean that ZANU-PF would win the election and then negotiate from a position of strength. Mugabe did not respond when Menkerios suggested the UN could facilitate a dialogue.

...and a Free and Fair Election

18. (C) Mugabe complained to Menkerios that the international community would condemn his government, no matter what he did in trying to make the election fair. Menkerios said he urged Mugabe to make it impossible to blame him by actually having a free and fair election. Government-sponsored arrests, detentions, and violence would make it impossible for the world to recognize a Mugabe victory. Menkerios further argued to Mugabe that if the election were not free and fair, there would be no international acceptance and the limited (targeted) sanctions now in place might well be widened. Menkerios said Mugabe, in response, implied it was not in ZANU-PF's interest to have a clean election, and ZANU-PF would worry about the consequences afterward.

UN Support for Observers

¶9. (C) Menkerios said there were now about 180 SADC observers in Zimbabwe. The UN was planning additional financial support to bring this number to at least 300. SADC was hoping for 400. The AU had 18 observers; with financial support it was hoping to increase this number to 60. ECOWAS had funding for 30 observers. Menkerios said the UN would try to fund an additional 30. Menkerios noted that the GOZ had said it would not limit the number of observers from invited organizations like SADC.

¶10. (C) Several diplomats raised with Menkerios the fact that the Zimbabwean Electoral Support Network (ZESN) had not yet been accredited. Menkerios promised to in turn raise the issue with GOZ officials.

The Remainder of the Visit...and After

¶11. (C) Menkerios said he came away from the meeting with Mugabe with the impression that Mugabe and ZANU-PF would do anything necessary to remain in power.

¶11. (C) Subsequent to the diplomatic briefing, Menkerios met with MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai and representatives of leading civil society organizations including Zimbabwe

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Lawyers for Human Rights and Counseling Services Unit. He was also to meet with high-ranking GOZ officials.

¶12. (C) Menkerios said he would depart Harare on June 20 and travel to Gaborone to meet with the SADC Secretariat and discuss election observation. In response to a question about whether his report would be made public, he said Secretary General Ban Ki-moon would decide.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) Menkerios is well-informed and is meeting the right people. We believe he will leave Zimbabwe with a clear understanding of the current situation, and his impression that Mugabe will do anything to remain in power is clearly on the mark. What is most important is that his findings be made public. While the Mugabe regime has claimed U.S. and other western reports of violence are biased, it would have more difficulty denying a UN report. In this regard, several South African generals during the last month have been investigating violence and the pre-electoral atmosphere throughout Zimbabwe. By all accounts, they have been shocked at what they have seen, and have reported to South African president Thabo Mbeki. Their report, however, has not been published. END COMMENT.

Warren